

We're Not in Hawkins Anymore... by Mileena

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Other

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Original Female Character(s), Original Male Character(s)

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-07-17

Updated: 2021-07-17

Packaged: 2022-03-31 11:10:36

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Chapters: 1

Words: 6,471

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Post season 3, Hopper has been thought dead but has ended up... in Russia...

We're Not in Hawkins Anymore...

Joseph paced. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Turn. Repeat. Back and forth across the tiles in his small room of the barracks. He wasn't a nervous man. But the pacing, it was rhythm, it was constant, and it was mindless. It helped him think. And Joseph knew he was in for a long night of thinking. Earlier that afternoon, the remnants of the US station had returned home to Mother Russia. Home to the base camp to report the Hawkins Project failures. Home, to inform him of their many losses, amongst whom included Joseph's brother, Alexi. And also, bringing with them... Him. The American. The Prisoner.

Joseph didn't know much about this newcomer yet, but he would. He had to. Had he been the last person to see his brother alive? Had he seen who was responsible? Or worse, had *he* been responsible? If that were the case, they would soon be short one American prisoner. Alexi had been the pride of their family. No one had ever understood Joseph the way Alexi had. And now, someone had snuffed that life, and someone was going to pay. Joseph would see to it, or he would die trying.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Turn. Repeat. One. Two. Joseph halted. If the American was brought in today, he was going to be held in the main building. He would be isolated, most likely, from the others. Of course, this prisoner was special. They would need to know what it was he knew.

Three. Four. Five. Six. Turn. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Another thought came to his mind. They wouldn't bother with asking. They wouldn't even likely bother with torturing it out of him. Though they might do that for effect, or for the sadistic pleasure of it all, there was no need to get any information from him that way. They would use *her*. A foolproof interrogation tactician. Known to the Russians as only "Shest", the Russian word for 'six' this woman could get any answer the Red Army needed from anyone she needed the answers from. The strongest of wills were useless against her. He had to see this. He had to know more about this American. But how?

Six. Turn. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Turn. There must be a way in. Joseph wasn't a General, by any means. But as a much lower

ranking Corporal, he had certain privileges that privates and cadets wouldn't have. No one would question him asking to see the interrogation. He would seem eager and passionate. In fact, he *was* both eager and passionate. His whole life he had dedicated himself to the military. His specialty had been in flying, and for many years it had been. Having landed at this particular post because of his brother, his job had been to transport anything they needed from the Siberian wasteland to the American one. This Indiana, it was a dump. And he had told his brother that when they had last said goodbye. If he had known it was the last time, he would ever see Alexi alive, he would have said so much more.

Turning on his heel, he grabbed his coat, hastily fixing the zipper and buttons, and heading with determination out into the blowing snow. Making his way across the short courtyard to the entrance of the main facility building, Joseph raised a mittened hand to the guards at the door, who nodded and let him pass. After removing his mittens and hat, stuffing them into the warm coat, he made his way down the corridor, finding the stairs to the lower levels. Quickly descending flight after flight, he knew this prisoner would be at the lowest level. He finally found himself at the last floor of the detainment area.

Looking around, catching his breath from his rush down so many stairs, Joseph saw a pair of officers walking toward him. Stopping them with one hand outstretched, he asked simply "Where did they take him?" The two officers frowned at each other, but Joseph knew the man on the left. He was older than his companion and had been through several missions with Joseph flying for his unit. Joseph searched his memory for a name. It hadn't really seemed important until right now, and right now when it mattered the most, he was drawing a blank. Just when the moment was about to pass, it hit him "Sergeant Yanovich, Sir. Please. Where did they take him?" The older man looked at him with more familiarity and nodded down the hallway from where they came. Nodding his thanks, Joseph carried on, leaving the two men as he searched for signs of the prisoner.

He moved past several iron doors, each with a worn, tired face pressed to the small, barred window on it. Most of these prisoners had been here merely weeks, yet they seemed to have aged rapidly. These prisoners were average criminals, traitors, AWOL soldiers even.

All of them met the same fate, to work their time away while they had it to give, and then to either succumb to exhaustion and malnourishment, or meet a grizzlier fate behind the last iron door.

Turning a corner, Joseph nearly ran into an open door. Stopping just short, he watched as two guards roughly shoved a tall man, who was obviously weak, yet still struggled against them, into the opened door of the cell. This must be him. The short brown hair, the mustache. This man was the American he had been hearing about. Still struggling, the American gruffly voiced some words that Joseph knew to be swear words in the American language. The two guards gave a final shove and moved from the cell, slamming the heavy door shut behind them. Locking it, they handed the key to Joseph, who stared but said nothing, and walked down the hall. Joseph couldn't believe his luck. Was he really here, in the right place at the right time?

Joseph peered through the bars of the small window of the door. This man looked savagely beaten. He was bloodied, bruised. His clothes were completely disheveled and torn but seemed to be remnants of one of the Russian uniforms. Was this man a spy? His head had already been shaven, his raggedy clothes were drenched and clung to him. Marching prisoners through the courtyards after hosing them down and shaving them was a favourite tactic here. Joseph knew the torture wasn't necessary to get the information they desired but breaking each man's will was an art form in its own. And a little torture did seem to go a long way with a lot of these men. But as he watched him, Joseph felt already like this man could prove to be different. Difficult, even.

He didn't have a lot of time to speculate, however. Soon a trio came down the corridor toward him. There were two men and one woman. Joseph stared, in spite of himself. Was this her? Was this Shest? He had never seen the woman in the flesh, only heard stories. Many, unbelievable stories. She was dressed in combat fatigues much like a soldier, but aside from her clothing, not a lot about this woman stood out as militant. Her long, dark hair hung loosely in a thick ponytail down her back, on her head was a black beret, and she did also wear black combat boots. Her make up was thick and dark, she had many piercings in each ear and her long nails were painted a glossy black. Her face was drawn in a serious, matter-of-fact look. She was very

business-like. And she was flanked by two men who, on the other hand, did look very militant. Dressed in the same fatigues and combat boots, they wore patches indicating they were a much higher rank than Joseph, and he stood at attention as they approached.

As the trio spoke amongst themselves, Joseph stood silently and he realized the woman was indeed Shest, and the two men were Colonel Vazov and Colonel Ustin, neither of which Joseph had officially met before, but who's fame preceded them as well. They were master interrogators. Not on the same level as their female counterpart, but they often got results with their torture tactics and brute force. Whatever this American might know, he had better consider giving it up easily for his own sake, thought Joseph.

Suddenly, three pairs of eyes were on Joseph. He twitched at the sudden attention but remained at attention. Finally, Colonel Ustin spoke up. "You, Corporal. Are you on guard duty for this man?" Joseph's mouth opened and shut again as his thoughts swam. If he lied, and was found out, there would be severe repercussions. If he didn't lie, he may miss any chance he had at finding some answers. He needed this, for Alexi.

"Sir, I wasn't. But it would be my honour, as the guard is not here" he said, addressing Ustin. The Colonel's eyes narrowed in thought, and then Shest spoke up, nudging his arm. "He will do, Colonel." She said, eyeing Joseph momentarily. Her eyes were dark, piercing spears. He would have sworn later that she could see directly through him. What could she see, he had later wondered. The two Colonels nodded to Joseph, leaving strict instruction that no one is to enter this room until they return, and he nodded in understanding. Watching the three move back down the hall, most likely planning their tactic to best draw information from this man.

After their footsteps faded, and silence settled the cold, deserted halls, Joseph turned to look in on the prisoner. This man that was so valued, that had caused such an uproar, now reduced to a shivering, huddled mass in the corner of the room. He appeared middle aged, somewhat the same age as Joseph. Of course, he was in no condition to do much more than lay in that crumpled pile and try to keep warm. His breath was coming in pained gasps. Joseph said nothing, he just watched this man, and wondered how he may have known his

brother. Did he injure Alexi? Did he see who did? Even worse, did he know Alexi's last words? He studied this man. Even if he didn't kill his brother, he must know who did, and someone was going to pay. Alexi's death would have never been an accident, Joseph knew that down to his very core.

He stayed there, watching this man in silence. Not much changed. The American was suffering. He was alone, probably confused. The hours went on, and after the Colonels and Shest had kept their prisoner in the dark for just long enough for his breathing to start to settle, maybe for his body to begin to adjust to the hard floor he lay crumpled on, they returned. Joseph quickly opened the door for them as they approached. Vazov and Ustin entered and stood to each side of the man. The American looked up, groggily, through swollen, exhausted lids. They grabbed him roughly, bringing him with no mercy to his feet. An audible groan came from the man, but he gave little else to them. He didn't plead, or even question them.

The men drug him from the cell, and the American put up little fight. Joseph could already imagine how much he had already been worked over before winding up down in this cell to begin with. He closed the door, when he felt Shest's hand again on his arm. "Come" the woman told him. Joseph wasn't going to ask questions, he followed the group down the halls. He knew the room they were going to. As the Colonels drug the prisoner to the cell at the end of the hallway, they roughly threw him into a single chair that sat bolted to the floor in the middle of the room. Straps hung at the sides, and the American was quickly held down and his feet and arms and chest were strapped tightly to the chair. A table nearby held an array of devices. Anyone could see this was a torture chamber, and Joseph was sure if the American was aware of his surroundings, he surely knew what must be coming.

A curious addition to the room, there was a metal cart near the table, with a small television perched on the top shelf of the cart. Nothing seemed to be hooked to it, just the television. Joseph was momentarily lost on this. Surely no signal was going to penetrate these walls, down in this dungeon. Why would there be a television here? He stood by, ready to assist when needed, as the Colonel's advanced once more on the American, after they were satisfied that

their prisoner was secure.

Colonel Maksim Vazov stepped in closer to the American. He was the taller of the two Russian men, and older. His short hair was dark and peppered grey. He had a very trimmed mustache and goatee that came to a tidy little point at the tip of his narrow face. His cold, grey eyes were fixed directly down on the American. Reaching into the front pocket of his own uniform and drew out a folded wallet. Opening it, his eyes never leaving the helpless man in front of him, he pulled the tattered leather open like a book and drew out an identification card. Vazov's English was a bit broken, but so was Joseph's. Joseph knew enough to communicate radio frequencies while in foreign lands, and not much else. He may have picked up a few words from rerun American television episodes if he saw any while on a flight mission.

"Jim Hopper. This is you, yes? We know your name. We know your home is Hawkins, Indiana." Vazov started, flashing the ID card at the man in the chair. The man grunted, and his voice was hoarse as he replied "So what? Don't expect a thank you if you send a birthday card."

"Jim Hopper" Vazov continued as though the other man never spoke. "We found you in a very curious place. How did you come to end up in our portal? What do you know about our operations?" Vazov's narrowed grey eyes studied the reactions of the man in front of him. If the American had any reaction, Joseph's eyes weren't trained well enough to spot them. Vazov gripped Jim Hopper's arms, strapped to the chair, and squeezed as he got in the man's face. "What do you know, Jim?" he demanded. Hopper spit. Showing no emotion as he reached up and wiped the spit from his cheek with the back of a gloved hand, Vazov took a deep breath and reached up and landed a hard punch, snapping the American's head to the left, his already battered cheek red from the impact. Another blow from the tall Russian sent the American's head snapping to the right.

"Go ahead. I ain't tellin you Ruskies shit" came the tired, gruff voice from the man in the chair. Joseph watched but didn't interrupt. However, the second Colonel did. Isaak Ustin was the younger man of the pair. Shorter than Vazov, he was built stoutly, and Joseph knew anyone on the receiving end of one of his punches was in for a

world of hurt. Ustin had short red hair, shaved short in military fashion. He also had a mustache, a much thicker handlebar version compared to the neat and trimmed appearance of his companion officer. Ustin's face was already red with anger as he stepped in front of their captive prisoner.

"You WILL tell us what we need to know. Do you want to die here, American trash?" he bellowed in Jim's face. Before Hopper could even answer, Ustin reeled back with a hard punch to the man's gut. Even Joseph winced, knowing the power that was behind that punch. The American choked, gagged even. Joseph wondered if he was already going to vomit, but he held his own after all. He let out the breath that he realized he had been holding.

Shest stepped forward at this point. Both the Colonels turned to her, and Joseph watched her approach the man in the chair. Hopper was very dazed at this point. He squinted up, the lights glaring uncomfortably in his narrowed eyes. "H-Heather?" he faintly whispered, looking up at the woman. Realizing his mistake quickly, his face straightened back to a mask of nothingness as he stared up at the unfamiliar woman. "No, Jim. Who is Heather? Will you tell me your secrets?" Shest asked. Joseph watched as Vazov turned the television set on, and as he had expected, nothing but blank white noise filtered in from the screen.

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More yelling. These Russians thought yelling at him in Russian was gonna get them somewhere? Nothing was gonna get them somewhere, but he didn't even understand what they were trying to get. Where was Bauman when you needed him? The few words of English they managed were confusing, and Jim was tired. So tired. But he was no stranger to interrogation. Both sides of it. He knew they wanted information, and by the way he got here, pulled through that Upside Down world by these Commie bastards, he was pretty sure he didn't need a translator to tell him what they wanted to know. Same thing Brenner wanted, and their tactics weren't a lot different so far.

Jesus that guy hits way harder than the last one. Harder than the troop of those shits that had worked him over when he got here... There was an explosion in his gut and Hopper thought he might puke.

'Keep your shit together' he told himself. Fighting for breath and composure, the room spinning, his vision went blurry. 'Too many blows to the head and now the gut' he thought. Someone stepped in front of him, and he squinted. Fought the bindings on his arms, but he couldn't rub the sweat from his eyes. Trying to bring the figure into focus... was it ... it couldn't be her. Not here. Before he could catch himself, he heard his own voice "H-Heather?" No. Shut up, Jim. It's not your girl. She's safe at home right where you left her. Then who? He heard the voice of a woman, but her face was still blurred and in shadow as she leered over him with these bright lights. This one spoke better English. He could tell what she had been saying... but he would never tell her anything either.

The woman stood close. Way too close for Jim's comfort, but comfort wasn't something that was being taken into consideration anywhere here. He knew that already. She stared at him. She just stared. As the fire in his gut started to turn to a dull ache, she still stared. The noise to his right distracted him. Turning his face from her, he saw the television come to life. Life ...but with static. All white noise, fuzz. Nothing.

Then there was something... not on the television. Something almost prodding at him. Poking around at his brain. Nothing physical but it felt like the pressure of ocean water against your skin. When you step into the water and the waves push back against you. Pressure. It was all around him, pushing him, rolling against him like waves of the ocean. What was happening? He stared back at this woman, whose gaze never left him. Was she...?

The screen came to life and all attention in the room went to it. Like watching a movie, but a movie in his head, Jim could only stare, open mouthed as the screen showed...him! The fiery death he knew had been coming. The portal starting to close, and the flames drawing toward him. He was going to die. He was feeling it, as they were all watching it.

Suddenly.

The tug of a hand on his arm. His collar pulled hard, sending him tumbling forward into that hell void. Into darkness as it closed around him. A dimming face, several of those Ruskies fleeing around him, and darkness.

The pressure eased. The tide seemed to roll back, and he felt like he was

breathing for the first time since that awful ordeal started. It may have lasted seconds, but it felt like hours. This woman...

"How?" he mumbled, half to himself, barely audible with his scratchy voice. "how?"

The woman didn't answer. She stood straight again for a moment, taking a deep breath. Collecting herself. After a moment, she bent again, and looked at him again, as though she were looking through him, staring into his soul, even. The pressure of the waters crashing against his mind flooded him again, and on the screen beside him flashed an array of images. Jim glanced to the side to see visions flashing by from his past; his Blazer pulling up at the Hawkins Police station, him leading a search party for Will Byers the year he went missing, waking up in the morning to pour milk into a bowl of cheerios back in his trailer years ago. It was as though this woman were just browsing through his most inner thoughts and memories.

She has powers, too.

Jim felt a sheen of panic run over his body. Whatever these Commies are looking for in his head... they can't find it. He has to keep her safe. They can't know about El- he can't even think about her. To prove his fear correct, a brief blur of a girl sitting and eating some Eggos at an old table flashed by, but as quickly as he could clear his mind, that image was replaced with the spectacular right hook he got on David O'Bannon at the Hideaway Sports Bar.

This last one actually made Hopper grin, ignoring the fact that his jaw hurt like a sonofabitch. This woman wasn't deterred, though. The pressure of the crashing waves continued. It was uncomfortable to say the least. And Jim knew it wasn't going to get any more pleasant as the time went on. Meanwhile the screen flickered away and he knew he had to take control again.

A few images flickered by of the gas station in Hawkins. Hopper was pumping gas, and walking in, pouring himself some coffee. But that image soon faded to a new memory. Officer Powell standing near the coffee maker at the police station, giving Hopper a questioning look as Hopper came in whistling, with a cup of gas station coffee in his hand. Before he could say anything, Officer Callahan comes over and plants a big wet kiss

on the side of his cheek, pointing up at some mistletoe hung overhead. It's Christmas and the office is decorated with tinsel and candy canes...

Waves lapped at the corners of his memories. Washing away the Christmas scene, a flash of the awful wasteland of the Upside Down flooded the screen. Hopper, dressed in a full hazard suit, stood next to Joyce Byers in her bright yellow suit. He shut his eyes and searched his own thoughts. He knew he had to fight this with everything he had. As that scene faded away, his friend Benny took its place. He was fishing with Benny. The two of them were out in Benny's boat, on the lake. Beers open, and lines in the water, he listened to Benny talk about his ex wife, and Hopper jokingly told Benny that's why he only believed in one night stands now. That seemed like forever ago. He missed Benny, but he didn't miss the one night stands.

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Shest stood straight again, stifling a scream of frustration back. Swiping the back of her hand across her nose, she felt the trail of blood and frowned. Joseph watched everything happening in complete awe. Did this American know about her? Was he using that against her?

Colonel Ustin stepped forward again. He cracked his knuckles and glared down at the American. His face a grim mask, but his green eyes showed all the anger and contempt for this man in front of him. Winding back his fist, Ustin let one hard blow fly, making contact against Hopper's ribs. A pained groan cut short by a winded gasp of pain, and Jim's blue eyes flew open before crunching closed tight while the pain flushed through him, exploding from his ribs. A second blow hit close to where the first landed and the prisoner noticeably crumpled, even under his restraints. His breaths were shallow and raspy.

Holding up a hand to stop him momentarily, Shest resumed her stance and the screen again jumped to life. Joseph stood silently, watching everything in awe, keeping his face straight, his features cold. The television showed another world, it seemed. Vines lined the walls and ground of the area, debris and skeletal remains of anything previously trapped by them and left behind, littered the area. Hopper

on the screen had a torch in one hand, a small knife in the other, and he wandered left to right, seeming lost amongst this maze of death and vines. Darkness threatened to overtake him from all around as he wandered.

As the Hopper there in the room with them stirred, catching his breath and coughing momentarily, the image faded a bit. The darkness on the screen crept in, as the memory Hopper tripped on the offending vines, and scrambled for his fire to keep the plants at bay. Soon that faded altogether to black and was replaced soon by a dimly lit room. Tables lined the outer edge of the room, the main floor left open. A banner hung over some of the tables read '1985 Hawkins Annual Police Ball Benefit' There on the television, Hopper held a woman in his arms. She had long, brown hair, dark eyes that gleamed as she smiled up at him. He held her tightly as he twirled her around the dance floor, the woman leaning up to give him a kiss before resting her head against his chest as they danced.

With a glance from Shest, Ustin let a hard upper cut fly, making contact under the American's chin, sending his head flying back as far as the headrest of the chair would allow. Blood trickled from the corner of the American's mouth. The happy couple on the screen still danced close but faded again and another room took its place on the television. This one much smaller. Colder. Plain, yet brightly lit. A Hopper on the screen sat, also fairly worked over, slouched forward as the door to the room opened, and a tall, slender man walked in. Dressed in a nice suit, this man was older. He had a head of thick white hair. Shest's eyes opened wide, watching the screen intently, but remaining silent. The man reached out his hand and gifted the on-screen Jim a pack of cigarettes.

From his chair, the American sputtered and coughed. Shest reached up, again wiping her nose and continued her work. She seemed almost disappointed when the setting faded again, an old, dirty cabin taking its place. Pushing some furniture around carefully, whipping a sheet from an old couch and shaking off debris, memory Hopper held a broom and started sweeping the old wooden plank floor. "This is your new home" he said but his companion faded fast, before the Russians could make them out. The memory was quickly replaced with one of four boys on bikes. They were rushing to set their bikes

down outside the same Hawkins gas station from earlier. Just before they got to the door, the dark-haired woman from earlier came out from inside the store. This time, she was dressed in ripped jeans and a faded old tee shirt. The boys gathered around her excitedly. One of the boys hugged her enthusiastically. Their conversation was jumbled together, but everyone in the room could hear excited chatter of a group of twelve-year-olds and make out a few words here and there about dragons, wizards, and campaigns.

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From his chair, Jim almost smiled. If his jaw didn't feel like it was broken, he may have. A tear formed at the corner of his eye seeing her, surrounded by those kids. Never thought he would miss their endless talking over each other. He missed her though. He didn't want to show these bastards these private things, but he could NOT show them other things. He couldn't.

Another blow to the side of his temple left Jim seeing stars. His vision blurred again. He could hear the memory but for a brief moment there was no control. Murry Bauman and Alexi flashed over the screen. Joyce Byers. Carnival music. On screen Hopper was searching for someone. The music mixed with the chatter of the crowd and... screaming. Yelling. Horror. It was Bauman. He was frantic and screaming for Jim to turn around as Alexi dropped to the ground. The Russian juggernaut pursuing them had just wasted one of his own. Murry dropped to the ground beside the scientist and Jim grabbed Joyce and took off running, leading the Russian away.

Shutting his eyes tightly, his thoughts muddled. He desperately searched for anything. Anything. Come on. THINK, JIM. Jesus. The pressure of the waves crashed against his mind. Invading his thoughts. Drowning him. The screen faded out, and slowly an on-screen Hopper reformed. This time, he was driving. It was nighttime, and the dashboard lights shone brightly in his old Blazer. He was reaching down to turn the radio station on the old FM radio. Sitting next to him, that same dark-haired girl, in her ripped jeans and old tee shirt sat with a big grin on her face. She started singing along to the music Jim found on the radio.

His head exploded in white fire. Another well placed blow to his temple sent Jim's head lulling, nearly knocking him unconscious. From

somewhere behind the bright white curtain of his eyelids he could faintly hear Heather's voice fade and mix with this Russian woman's, until the Russian took over. "No no! It's too much! We will try again later" she said, her own voice weary as well. Jim felt a small, grateful rush of relief flood through him, and he let the darkness of unconsciousness take him.

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After the trio of interrogators had formed their plan when to return, they left Joseph to manage the badly beaten prisoner, returning him to his cell down the hall. After a small struggle to get man inside his cell, Joseph let him fall onto the thin bedroll on the floor. He looked down at this American. So many thoughts went through his mind at that moment. Mainly about his brother. This man *had* seen Alexi's final moments. It seemed as though he had even been teamed with Alexi. Why would Alexi have teamed up with a group of Americans? Why would Gregori kill his brother? He *HAD* seen him, with his own eyes, hadn't he? That was the beauty of Shest's powers. No one could lie and hide from her.

Joseph felt a rage growing inside of him. A rage he hadn't known in his entire life. Vengeance. He thought he felt it when he learned Alexi had been killed. But seeing his brother's final moments. Knowing his killer. Joseph's rage grew. He couldn't let this go. He *wouldn't* let this go. As Joseph stood, towering over this badly battered man, his mind reeling, he knew he had to do something. He had to know more.

It was in this moment, he would realize later, that he first started to hatch his plan. At first, he didn't really even understand why he was doing it, but he calmly reached down, and helped the American get a bit more comfortable. He helped him stretch his legs and move to a laying position, rather than slumping against the wall. His eyes met with the prisoner's and he saw confusion in the man's eyes. Confusion that Joseph had to admit, in that moment, he had also shared with him. Turning, he moved out of the cell, closed the door behind him, and stood guard, as expected. He listened to the man's laboured breathing even out as his body started to adjust to what little comfort the bedroll could have offered him. Shest had needed rest after such an ordeal on her powers. This American had clearly put up more resistance than she had been used to before. Joseph

knew she wouldn't be returning that evening.

When the prisoner meal was served, slop was more accurate, Joseph carried the tray to the door and slid it carefully under the iron door. Looking inside, he saw the man wasn't stirring. After a little while, Joseph again opened the door and slipped inside. He brought the tray over to the man. Helping him sit, leaning against the wall, he watched as the American winced. Joseph grabbed up the tray of food and brought it to the man. He set it on his lap and when Jim gave him a blank stare, Joseph motioned with his hands to put the food in his mouth.

"Eat, you eat." He mumbled.

"You speak English?" Hopper asked quietly.

"No. No English. No no" Joseph said. It was true enough. He would never be able to hold a full-on conversation with this man. "You eat" he said again. Hopper slowly picked up the chunk of crusty bread that lay on the tray and broke a piece off, bringing it to his mouth. Joseph nodded as he watched him. "Strong" he mumbled.

Jim chewed carefully through the pain in his jaw. He watched Joseph the entire time he broke off bite sized pieces of the bread. Joseph kept an eye on him also. He frowned, trying to figure out how to form any words this American would recognize. Maybe Jim was doing the same. Finally, it was Jim that spoke again. "You uh, you got a name? A name?" As Joseph stared blankly at him, Jim softly lay a hand over his own chest. "Jim. I'm Jim." He said and extended his hand toward Joseph.

"Joseph. I'm Joseph. You. Eat." Joseph again went to his post outside the door. When he was satisfied that the American had eaten, he watched as Hopper lay down himself, slowly and obviously in some pain. Watching as officers and other corporals and cadets came and went down the halls, saluting his superiors, Joseph had plenty of time to stand and think over things. He couldn't believe seeing those things on the television like that. What powers this woman had! And seeing Alexi, turned on by one of his own. Gregori was one of the Red Army's own. Joseph had watched him murder Alexi in cold blood. And where was Gregori now? He hadn't returned with the

others. He was back in the wasteland called Indiana, then? Hiding? Or on another mission?

Joseph was still lost in thought when his replacement had come. He was relieved to find it was Cadet Cyrus Valek. Joseph knew this man wasn't the most ambitious nor the brightest. If Joseph came back to relieve him early, Valek wasn't going to question it. He glanced into the cell one last time to see that the American seemed to be asleep. Or at the very least, resting. Joseph doubted very much he was getting any actual sleep tonight. He excused himself and made his way back to his room at the barracks. Intending only to sleep and get right back to guard duty, his plan was now starting to form a little more cohesively in his mind now.

The next morning, Joseph woke up early, pulling on his uniform and warm coat right away. In the pockets, he wrapped up some slices of cheese and apples of his own food rations. Easily explained as his own lunch, he set off across the blowing, icy courtyards and made his way back to the dungeons. Finding a very tired Cadet at the door, he greeted him and was relieved that no questions were asked about his early arrival.

As the prisoners settled into their morning routine of going to work outside, Joseph kept his guard, informing the others this prisoner was to stay in his cell and await Shest. He knew dropping the woman's name would be the easiest way to have no questions asked. After everyone had reported to their stations outside, Joseph checked down the halls once more. Satisfied with the barren hallways, he opened the door and let himself into Hopper's cell.

He looked down at the resting man. Jim looked up through swollen, very tired lids. "You again" he said as Joseph approached him. Crouching down, Joseph regarded him carefully. He searched for words to try to communicate. "You.... Alexi?"

"What?" asked Hopper, slowly lifting up to raise up on an elbow. "What did you say?"

“You...Alexi?” Joseph asked.

“Are you asking if I knew him? You friends?” Jim asked in a low voice. His blue eyes looked up to meet Joseph’s gaze. He pointed at Joseph. “You... Alexi... uh... comrades?” Joseph frowned for a moment. Comrades. How could he explain anything to this American? He shook his head and laid a hand on his heart and put the other hand over it.

“Bre.. Breh.. “ he was frustrated. What word could he use? Patting his heart again. Jim watched him struggle for the right words.

“Brother? Was he your brother?” Jim asked in surprise. Joseph nodded at the unfamiliar word. That must be what he had been trying to find in his memory. Brother. Jim sat in silence for a minute. “Wow. Yeah... I knew him. I knew Alexi.” He confirmed. Joseph reached into his pocket, making Jim sit up more quickly than his bruises would have liked. As Jim winced, Joseph pulled the wrapped up food from his pocket. Unwrapping the cheese and apples, he offered it to Jim., who looked questioningly at him.

“You eat.” He simply said. He didn’t need to say it twice. Jim took the food from him without another word, barely chewing the first few pieces. Joseph knew he would be hungry. He kept an eye on the door as the man ate. He knew now without a doubt. His plan was going to start right now. This American knew his brother. He didn’t kill him, and he was Joseph’s best chance at finding Gregori to get his vengeance. He would get this man out of here. They would get back to that wasteland called Indiana. Back to Hopper’s memories, and to Joseph’s revenge. He would make sure, even if it was the last thing he did. And that plan started today.